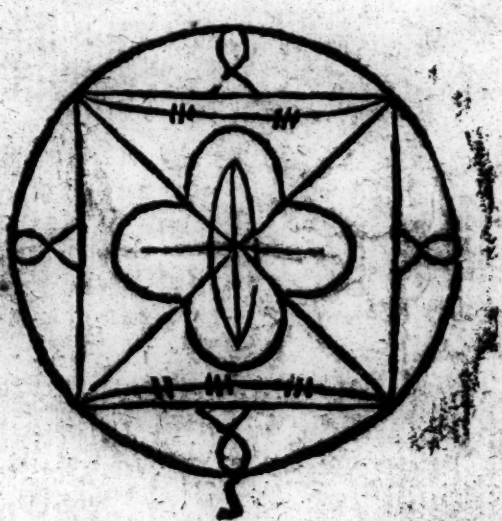
THE STAR-CHAMBER EPITOMIZED

OR,

A dialogue between *Inquisition*, a news-Smeller, and *Christopher Cob-Web*, a Keeper of the Records, for the Star-chamber, as they met at the Office in *Grayes-Inne*.

Wherein they Discourse how the Clerkes used to exact Fees, and of the likely alteration.



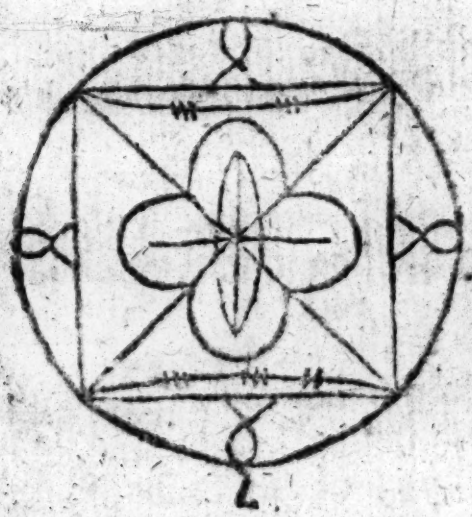
London printed 1641.

THE STAR-CHAMBER EPITOMIZED

OR,

A dialogue between *Inquisition*, a news-Smeller, and *Christopher Cob-Web*, a Keeper of the Records, for the Star-chamber, as they met at the Office in *Grayes-Inne*.

Wherein they Discourse how the Clerkes used to exact Fees, and of the likely alteration.



London printed 1641.

THE STAR-CHAMBER EPITOMIZED.

OR,

A DIALOGUE betweene *Inquisition*, a Newes-Smeller and *Christopher Cob-web*, a keeper of the Records, for the *Star-Chamber*.

In. MY old friend *Christopher Cob-web*, how goe all things at your Office, what is it full Terme with the brave Sparkes of your Court?

Cr. Truly Sir I am sore affraid, the Term is at his full hight, I believe I have laid all the records in their severall places, and placed them in due order to little purpose.

In. Why I pray thee what is the matter, I hope the Parliament doth not meddle with so great a Court as your high Court of *Starchamber*.

Cr. For my part I know not what the Parliamẽt either doth, or intendeth to do, but this I am sure of, al my Masters that had used to sel some of their papers so deare, as they doe at the Lottery, walke from one end of the Office to the other sighing & pittifully complain, & say their time of Angel-gathering, they are sore affraid, is at an end.

In. Is it possible any thing can discourage the sparks of your Office had they bin corrupt? as I believe it is unpossible.

Ch. No truly I think they were never corrupt, for they were honest men enough in all conscience to be Lawyers.

In. Why, are not Lawyers so honest as other men, do you know any thing to the contrary?

Ch. No Sir, I dare not say to the contrary, for I have all my livelihood from amongst al these large Bundels of Law, which I have displaced in their order, and cleansed them from the Cob-webs, wherewith they were plentifully hung.

In. They are very large indeed, they cost something in writing.

Chr. I believe you, for they have bin coppied, ingrossed, written, rescribed, prescribed & transcribed forty times over.

In. But what did the Clyants use to pay for so many times writing?

Chr. Yes that they did, and in ready mony too, the sparkes of our Court would not be procrastinated, prorogued or demurred.

In. But I hope their rates were conscionable, were they not?

Cob. Yes, they did pay but xij d. a sheet for the coppy. *In.* That was something deare, but how did they write them?

Cob. Very conscionably, some 15 lines in a sheet, with some 4 or 5 words in a line, which straddled so wide as an ordinary Frenchman.

In. In my opinion xij d. a sheet was sōthing dear.

Cob. Alas, that was not all, they must pay to the

Gent.

Gent. in the cut-finger'd Gloves for the expedition, and for the writing, beſides the xij. d. a ſheet for the coppie. *In.* Thou now tells me of a thing more then ever I heard of, is it poſſible, a thing may be copyed and ingroſſed, and not written, that the Client muſt pay xij. d. a ſheet for the coppy, beſides money for writing, and expedition, ſurely both they Maſters and the clarks of your Offices, have brave times of it.

Cob. Yes, they had brave times of it, but now (if we may credit their owne report) theſe dayes are done, and they muſt ſuffer now for all their exactions, and extortions, for the ſqueeſing and ſcrewing their Clyants. *In.* How I pray did they ſqueeſe their Clyants? *C.* Why it had bin almoſt ſo good for a man to have bin two Termes in the high Commiſſion (which is now in faire poſſibility to be purged from it's exactions, by thoſe ſure curers the *Parliament Doctors*) then one Terme in the *Star-chamber*.

In. That is unpoſſible ſure.

Chr. Oh theſe Gent. have had brave times of it; for had a Clyant come ſome 50. or 60. miles for a *ſubpœna*, they would have made him to have attended at leaſt 3. dayes, when they could have diſpatched it in halfe an houre, and *Puny* in the mackereled taild Gowne, would have made him to have paid 5. s. for his extraordinary care and labour, though it belonged to his office to take forth the writ *gratis*, and beſides he ſhould have paid at leaſt xij. d. more then his due for the Fee of the Writ.

In. This was intollerable exaction, but I pray thee proceed.

Chr. Had a good Fellow but killed a Coney within halfe a mile of a Gent. Parke, *Spy-fault* he that

sowes the seed of dissention for our Court (though the Gent. that owed the Parke never knew of it) would straight have him up, and would draw a Bill in Parliament the compasse of a mourning Cloke, wherein hee would set forth, that contrary to the peace of our Soveraigne Lord the King, the people being unlawfully armed with Guns, Swords, Bowes and Arrowes, and furnished with Dogs, nets, and other Engins, there hunted, killed, and destroyed all his Deere and game of Conies, with more superfluous words then are contained in a *Calliepeia*, and the poore ignorant Clyant being fetched up, and seeing all these strange matters layd to his charge; would with all his heart give halfe he was worth to be rid of this unjust businesse; & then must be forced to compound with *Spy-fault* & these other spungy Gent. who would looke so contemptibly upon the poore fellow, as a brasen-faced Jaylor will upon a Malefactor.

In. But what in case the poore fellow had not ready mony, would they nor give him some time to furnish himselfe?

Cr. No, they had no more conscience nor beleef then the compounded fat bawd in the middle of *Beech-lane*; for had he not ready mony, they would rap out twenty Basiliske oathes, and cry *Currat Lex*.

In. But I pray thee to what use was the money taken, and how was it imployed?

Cr. To build neither *Hospitalls*, nor *Almes-houses*, neither the King, Common-wealth, nor party wronged, was the better for it; is was for the onely benefit of our large conscienced Clarkes.

In. I pray thee proceed.

Cr. Had a poore Clyant that was to put in his answer

swer to one of these or such like unconscionable matters, or to appeare upon some occasion in the Court, but neglected halte an houre more then the time limited: the two Clarkes would have agreed together to informe the Court of the contempt, and straight have him censured; which with their subtile devises for Fees and such like would have beene twice the value of the offence, and the poore Clyant should surely pay every farthing, or else lye in prison, and out of hand too a writ then would be sued forth for the levying of that in halfe an houre, which is something under three dayes.

In. But I pray thee explaine who were these two Clarkes.

Chr. Why the one was to be for the plaintiffe, and other for the Defendant.

In. Is it possible that two adverse Clarkes should agree to cozen the poore Clyant? then I perceive it is full time these things should be looked unto.

Chr. It is true as I tell you, for though they would in the presence of the ignorant Clyants raile at one another, and accuse one another of undue proceeding, yet at night at a Taverne or else-where in some private place they would divide the spoyle and laugh at the silly ignorance of the poore Clyant; they have a thousand of these wayes: I have known them make the Clyant pay for expedition in the middle of a long vacation when they have had nothing at all to doe, yet many times made the defendant to put in his answer and take a coppy of the Bill when the plaintiffe hath signified he is satisfied, and that they are agreed?

In. Surely then the Clarkes of your Offices are very rich.

Chr.

Chr. Yes, truly some of them are; but there is other some who have laid out more money then was their owne for the purchasing of places in our Offices.

Inquis. And how doe they take it?

Chr. Faith for them who lived long in our office as Ministers preach conscience to their under-clarks, and say they must write more close with their words, whereas before they could never write wide enough, and the rest that have laid out more then their owne whole estates upon their Office, hang downe their dejected heads, all say they are utterly broke, and know not what course to take, *And I my selfe must sing the same song, for I faile in my trade too*: yet I hope my generous Masters will let me have this benefit for all my good service, to make my best profit of all these large Roles of parchment, which I will sell to *Hugh Higginbottome*, at the sign of the 24. halfe-penny loaves in *Threed-needle-Street*, who will sell them by retaile to furnish all the large measuring Taylors in Towne; for they are fit for nothing else, and I hope this will be sufficient to maintaine me in an honest way. And so farewell all *Star-chamber* Execution.

FINIS.